

The University of Chicago

BELIEF AND ART

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED
TO THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE
HUMANITIES IN CANDIDACY FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

1935

By

WILLIAM VINCENT EVANS

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INTRODUCTION

This paper owes its beginning in large part to I. A. Richards' categorical statement that "We need no beliefs, and indeed we must have none, if we are to read King Lear."¹ It is an attempt to explore not only certain alternatives to Richards' assertion, but also the aesthetic groundwork upon which any theory of the relation of art and belief must rest.

Like Richards' statement such a groundwork must be roughly dual. It is normative and descriptive. It is concerned with what beliefs about and in art ought to be, and with what the relations of belief and art actually are. Thus any attempt to investigate or disprove Richards' standpoint must face two problems. According to the normative problem it must determine the extension to be accepted for belief, and what we mean when we say that we ought or ought not to believe in art. According to the descriptive problem it must investigate how far belief enters into actual art experience. The first task is largely speculative and definitive, the second chiefly empirical. Since the first task is clearly concerned with the wider variable it must be considered before the other. Notwithstanding all the variation of which art is capable, it is clear that beliefs about it may vary more. For art, or at least the body of art, is a more or less tangible thing. When we speak of art, there is reasonable agreement about what is meant. There is little dispute, for example, that King Lear is a work of art. Yet there is much difference of opinion about what is meant by belief, even, as will be noted, by beliefs in and about this particular play. Whether or not Richards' statement is to be accepted depends primarily upon the extension to be accepted for belief. If belief is to be attached only to what is historically verifiable, then beliefs have indeed no place in King Lear. But if beliefs have within their province the possible and the general we can hardly read Lear without them.

The essay at hand is developed under this second and wider notion of belief. It maintains that it is precisely in the realm of the possible and the general that art and belief meet. Under this interpretation, art and belief are held to be

¹Science and Poetry (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1926), p. 72.

variables which may be mutually dependent. This standpoint denies on the one hand the purist theories of art for art's sake which assert that art must be divorced from all other experience, and that it can therefore be judged only from within; and it denies, on the other hand, the type of utilitarian aesthetics which asserts that there can be no real art that is not at the same time the expression of a definite social belief.

Granting the middle course here proposed, three fields appear as roughly separable -- the field of belief which is unconcerned with art, the field of art which is unconcerned with belief, and the field in which they are related.

About the existence of the first of these groups there can be little dispute. Whatever may be found to be the aesthetic nature of all belief experience, obviously there are beliefs wholly unconcerned with art.

Whether or not the second group, namely the field of art unconcerned with belief, has actual existence depends upon the type of belief in question. Certainly there are, or may be, beliefs about any form of art, and such art forms may then be said to embody such beliefs. Yet there are many kinds of art that are not involved in the intentional transmission of definite beliefs. Play, decorative art, and the art that seeks only the imitation or expression of beauty are clearly without belief intent, however much beliefs may be built around them or however much they may be used as the expression of beliefs, for example, in the desirability of an economic status.

The remaining field, i.e., the field of art obviously concerned with belief expression, can hardly be denied existence. Controversy is for the most part concerned not with whether propaganda art exists, but with whether such art is "good" or "bad" art, pure or impure. The point at issue, then, and the chief concern of this dissertation is the nature of the art-belief relationship, what may be its aesthetic warrant when it occurs, and what it may cost either member to it. Is art any the less art because of the beliefs expressed in it, or does sharing and comprehending those beliefs enhance the aesthetic experience? Are beliefs that are to be found in a work of art merely compatible with it, or have they been inserted surreptitiously, or do they belong there as necessary to the aesthetic result? May beliefs, particularly social beliefs, be integral to art?

As already suggested, the attempt to answer these questions requires at least two main lines of pursuit: first, some analysis of the nature of the beliefs concerned with and in art, and of what may be our right to believe them, and, second, some observation of the characters in art and in belief that may make

their relationship integral or not. In the working out of these questions at least two familiar and important aesthetic problems are involved -- the problem of whether there may be a unique or sui generis character to aesthetics, and the closely related problem of form and content. More broadly, both are aspects of the problem of the continuity of experience.

This paper proceeds towards a conclusion of general continuity, an assumption with which Richards is in accord. Yet Richards, having asserted an aesthetic continuity, shifts from it to an atomism of artistic experience versus scientific experience, declaring that artistic experience is in no way to be believed in as we believe in science. Richards' development of this apparently contradictory position sets the problem of art and belief very clearly. The dissertation at hand, although not primarily intended to be an analysis or refutation of Richards' theory, has the immense advantage of his work as a point of departure, and accordingly begins with a summary statement of his position.

CHAPTER I

I. A. RICHARDS' THEORY OF BELIEF AND ART

Probably the most important recent study of the problems of art and belief is that made by I. A. Richards in his Principles of Literary Criticism (1924), Science and Poetry (1926), and Practical Criticism (1929). Concerned for the most part with the sort of belief-acceptance that poetry reading involves, Richards offers conclusions that must be accepted or answered, and that in any case have given the problem a clarity to which it has not otherwise attained. At the outset Richards maintains that there is no character of experience that is sui generis aesthetic. Yet against this assertion he posits a strictly dual conception of language as either emotive or factual, and denies any proper relation of belief experience to art experience. The far-reaching implications of this position require some review of Richards' argument.

1. There is no unique aesthetic character

There is, maintains Richards, neither unique aesthetic emotion, nor unique aesthetic constituent, nor special aesthetic form. Aesthetic experience, to be sure, is, in a narrow sense at least, confined to experiences of beauty and implies value,¹ but as such it is "only a further development, a finer organization of ordinary experience, and not in the least a new and different kind of thing."²

Artistic experience is aesthetic experience which is deliberately communicated and preserved. Art serves ordinary experience because it is a storehouse of recorded values;³ and it becomes such a storehouse because it is the supreme form of communicative activity.⁴ Artists, it is true, often work without consciously thinking of their work as communication, but the very

¹Principles of Literary Criticism (New York: Harcourt Brace and Co., 1928), p. 16.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 32.

⁴Ibid., p. 26.

"rightness" that they seek in their art is a guarantee of its communicative efficacy. Yet not only is this "rightness" or aesthetic organization of art necessary for the transmission and maintenance of values; it is itself a value and a training point for the perception of values.

Richards holds anything to be valuable which will satisfy a desire or appetency without frustrating other appetencies of equal or greater importance;¹ and which will satisfy such a desire in the widest possible way. He says, "The most valuable states of mind, then, are those which involve the widest and most comprehensive co-ordination of activities and the least curtailment, conflict, starvation and restriction."² Now it is the aim of art not only to preserve experiences which have this value, but to create and develop finer responses than those of ordinary experience. Thus art may become legislative to experience in the sense of training response to it, and of stimulating its finer organization. Thus if the good is the well-organized, it is absurd to divorce art from morals, for art both organizes and extends the technique of organization. Hence poetry cannot be separated from life, and Shelley was right in insisting that the basis of morality was laid not by preachers but by poets. "The separation," declares Richards, "of poetic experience from its place in life and its ulterior worths involves a definite lopsidedness and incompleteness in those who preach it sincerely."³

Nor can poetry be judged from within, as A. C. Bradley has maintained,⁴ for if poetry could be separated from life and its values, a like separation would be implied in the life and mind of the reader. But this cannot be done. Richards says:

"It is impossible to divide a reader into so many men -- an aesthetic man, a moral man, a practical man, an intellectual man, and so on. It cannot be done. In any genuine experience all these elements inevitably enter. But if it could be done, as many critics pretend, the result would be fatal to the wholeness and sanction of the critical judgment. We cannot read Shelley adequately while believing that all his views are moonshine. Into an adequate reading of the greater kinds of poetry everything not private and peculiar to the individual reader must come in. The reader

¹Ibid., p. 48.

²Ibid., p. 59.

³Ibid., p. 79.

⁴Oxford Lectures in Poetry (London: Macmillan and Co., 1909), pp. 3ff.

must be required to wear no blinkers, to overlook nothing which is relevant, to shut off no part of himself from participation."¹ (*Italics not in original.*)

What the nature of such whole-hearted participation is to be, and how far we must believe Shelley in order to read him, is a matter for further inquiry. The results of Richards' study are not entirely what the above quotation would lead one to expect; for it turns out that to read Shelley adequately we are to believe his views only in a very special way, that is, emotively, and not intellectually or scientifically. In so far as the emotive apprehension of poetry becomes a special mode of believing, then aesthetic experience does become something unique, after all, if it must, as Richards concludes, be wholly divorced from science and the scientific trust in verification.

2. Richards' psychological principles

The process by which Richards develops this separation involves a number of psychological and logical assumptions. These include the abandonment of any sort of faculty psychology, a theory of the emotions as incipient action, and a dual theory of the function of language. These assumptions are of primary importance and will be reviewed briefly in order:

a. Any theory of knowing, feeling, and willing as incomprehensible ultimates must be abandoned, and the causation, character, and consequences of a mental event taken as the fundamental aspects for its study. Roughly, as Richards notes, causation may be compared to knowing, character to feeling, and consequences to striving or willing. In this way these categories may be shown to be characters present in varying degrees in every mental event, and in all events.² From this assumption is developed the important correlates that to know anything is to be influenced by it, and that "expectation, usually described as a cognitive attitude, becomes a peculiar form of action, getting ready, namely, to receive certain kinds of stimuli rather than others."³

b. Richards holds that emotion is insufficiently described as a state of more than usual excitement, and that it is too broadly described as any mental activity whatever. Rather it is characterized by a "diffused reaction of the organs of the body

¹Op.cit., p. 79.

²Ibid., p. 89.

³Ibid., p. 88.

brought about through the sympathetic systems," and by "a tendency to action of some kind or group of kinds."¹ Such an incipient tendency to act is what Richards calls an attitude. Yet these incipient tendencies in any given experience may often be so balanced that no overt action takes place.² In fact it is often the function of art, and of a cultivated response to art, to prevent such action.³ Richards says:

"The response required in many cases by works of art is of a kind which can only be obtained in an incipient or imaginal stage. For these responses are commonly of the nature of solutions to problems, not of intellectual research but of emotional accomodation and adjustment, and can usually be best achieved before the matter has become further complicated by the irrelevant accidents which attend overt tendencies."⁴

The benefit of good art is that it may provide training in such organized responses, and the danger in bad art is that it may lower response either by disorganizing it so that it proceeds to overt action, or by reorganizing it on a lower level. "An improvement of response is the only benefit which anyone can receive, and the degradation, the lowering of response, is the only calamity."⁵ But the responses developed by art are not limited to the appreciation of art in their use. There is transfer of organizing ability from art to the rest of experience, so that what happens in art may modify all the rest of life.⁶

Since the value of art lies in its balance and in its wholeness, the "understanding" of art must be primarily concerned with its whole effect rather than with the conscious discrimination of details. "Understanding" a work of art is not, therefore, "to reflect upon it, to inquire into its principles and consciously

¹Ibid., p. 101.

²Ibid., p. 111.

³Cf. Max Eastman who maintains that art arrests action. "All works of art must find some way to stand up against the stream of action." The beauty of a drinking cup halts our drinking from it. (Art and the Life of Action [New York: A. A. Knopf, 1934], p. 11.)

⁴Op. cit., p. 112.

⁵Ibid., p. 237.

⁶Ibid., p. 238. As Richards points out, this is an application of the Aristotelian notion of katharsis, which Richards translates as "refinement."

distinguish its characters, but to respond to it as a whole, in a coherent way which allows its parts their due share and their proper independence in the response."¹ We respond the more readily to art as a whole because it is deliberately formed for that purpose and because it provides the context of attitudes involved. It is then the function of criticism to be concerned with the whole effect of a work of art rather than merely with its details. In this way Richards finds the understanding of analytic prose in which details and the references of details to other experience are important.

Richards' psychological principles, which say, in effect, that no mental activity is separable or unique, and that the value of all experience, artistic and other, lies in its organization, support his assertion that there is no unique aesthetic experience, and lend themselves readily to a theory of the relationship of art and belief. From the principle that all events have aspects analogous to knowing, feeling, and willing, it follows that art, which emphasizes feeling but must contain elements of willing, and belief, which is clearly concerned with willing but must have aspects of feeling, might easily be associated, even, in cases, identified. Yet if belief involves a tendency to action, and art a tendency to balance or inaction, they may work against each other. It is precisely because of his definition of scientific belief as readiness to act,² that Richards makes a clean separation between such scientific or referential beliefs and the emotive beliefs that are attendant upon art. Art, Richards claims, is, or should be, concerned only with emotive or "objectless" beliefs, belief-feelings, or attitudes, and the whole art and attitude structure, aimed at balance, totally divorced from the realm of "true" or scientific beliefs, aimed at action. This separation is based on his theory of the dual function of language.

3. Richards' theory of language

There are, Richards asserts, two totally distinct uses of language.³ These are, on the one hand, the referential or scientific, and on the other, the emotive or fictional. "The sense," declares Richards, "in which we believe a scientific proposition is not the sense in which we believe emotive utterances, whether

¹Ibid., p. 183.

²Ibid., p. 277.

³Ibid., p. 261. Cf. also C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards, The Meaning of Meaning (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1925) for the origin of this theory.

they are political, or critical, or poetic."¹ The emotive use of language may be completely objectless and non-referential, for "to think about Good or Beauty is not necessarily to refer to anything."² Science, on the other hand, is concerned solely with reference. "Science is simply the organization of reference with a view solely to the convenience and facilitation of reference."³ If other considerations intervene in science, what we have is so much the less science. Yet there are, thinks Richards, innumerable important human activities which require other than scientific treatment, which actually need "distorted references, or, more plainly, fictions."⁴ Such fictions may produce important and valuable attitudes. To call poetry such a fiction is not to say that it is meant to deceive. What is meant is that it is of no moment whether its references are true or false. Poetry is meant to be used, not verified. It deceives only when we mistake it for science. Such mistakes, says Richards, occur often, for "belief feelings, are parasitic, and will attach themselves to all kinds of hosts."⁵ He thereupon concludes that all beliefs, in the sense in which belief involves a trust in verification, must be shorn from poetry. "But in the reading of King Lear, what facts verifiable by science or accepted or believed in as we accept and believe in ascertained facts are relevant? None whatever."⁶ And in Science and Poetry, "We need no beliefs, and indeed we must have none, if we are to read King Lear."⁷

In Science and Poetry Richards makes even more emphatic the separation between the two functions of language. Here the "belief-feelings" or "objectless beliefs" of the former work are "pseudo-statements." "A pseudo-statement," he says, "is a form of words which is justified entirely by its effect in realizing or organizing our impulses and attitudes."⁸ Such a "false statement" is called "false" because it is not true either in the sense that it is verifiable, or in the sense that it is logically

¹Ibid., p. 277.

²Ibid., pp. 264 f.

³Ibid., p. 265.

⁴Ibid., p. 266.

⁵Ibid., p. 284.

⁶Ibid., p. 282.

⁷Op. cit., p. 72.

⁸Ibid., pp. 70 f.

coherent. It has, however, a form of pragmatic truth. "A pseudo-statement is 'true'," asserts Richards, "if it suits and serves some attitude, or links together attitudes which on other grounds are desirable. This kind of truth is so opposed to scientific truth that it is a pity to use so similar a word, but at present it is difficult to avoid the malpractice."¹ Gone irrevocably, says Richards, are "countless pseudo-statements about God, about the universe, about human nature, the relations of mind to mind, etc."² The only remedy he finds left, if we are at loss about these matters, is to retain the pseudo-statements as organizers of our attitudes, but no longer to really believe in them. "The remedy," he declares, "since there is no prospect of our gaining adequate knowledge, and since indeed it is fairly clear that genuine knowledge cannot serve us here, and can only increase our practical control of Nature, is to cut our pseudo-statements free from belief, and yet retain them, in this released state, as the main instruments by which we order our attitudes to one another and to the world."³

4. Richards' practical test of his theory

Practical Criticism is an attempt to verify this theory. Here Richards is concerned with the specific problem, "What bearing has the truth-values of the views upon the worth of poetry?"⁴ This he seeks to determine by comparing students' written responses to a number of poems presented to them without name or author. Most notable among these poems is John Donne's Holy Sonnet VII.⁵ Responses to this poem indicated that both ignorance

¹Ibid., p. 70.

²Ibid., p. 71.

³Ibid., p. 72.

⁴Practical Criticism (New York: Harcourt Brace and Co., 1929), p. 16.

⁵ At the round earth's imagined corners blow
Your trumpets angels, and arise, arise
From death, you numberless infinities
Of souls, and to your scattered bodies go.
All whom the flood did, and fire shall o'erthrow,
All whom war, dearth, age, agues, tyrannies,
Despair, chance, law hath slain, and you whose eyes
Shall behold God, nor ever taste death's woe.
But let them sleep, Lord, and me mourn a space,
For, if beyond all these my sins abound

of traditional Christian cosmology and doctrinal grudges against it were serious obstacles to understanding. Richards found that:

"Many who try to read religious poetry find themselves strongly invited to the beliefs presented, and that doctrinal dissent is a very serious obstacle to their reading. Conversely, many successful but dissenting readers find themselves in a mental attitude towards the doctrine which, if it is not belief, closely resembles belief."¹

Those who dissent intellectually but hold towards art this emotional attitude which resembles belief are thus forced into a sort of reluctant dualism. But this is not, thinks Richards, an antagonistic or incompatible dualism. He says:

"This intellectual disbelief does not imply that emotional belief in the same idea is either impossible or even difficult -- much less that it is undesirable. For an emotional belief is not justified through any logical relations between its idea and other ideas. Its only justification is its success in meeting our needs."²

5. Critique of Richards' theory

Thus we do seem to have the reader divided into an intellectual man and an aesthetic-practical man. The reader's intellectual beliefs concern the relation of thoughts to other thoughts that support or contradict them. They are logically consistent yet only receptive as far as action goes.³ The reader's emotional beliefs are concerned with "sentiments, feelings, desires, and attitudes." These are the beliefs that are turned towards action.⁴

We must bring our intellectual beliefs, says Richards, into correspondence with the central and widest facts of nature, (i.e., the facts of science) or we perish. Yet our emotional

Tis late to ask abundance of thy grace
When we are there. Here on this lowly ground
Teach me how to repent, for that's as good
As if thou hadst sealed my pardon with thy blood.

John Donne, Holy Sonnets, VII

¹Op. cit., p. 273.

²Ibid., p. 274.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid. This is not consistent with Richards' definition of scientific beliefs as readiness for action. Cf. Principles of Literary Criticism, p. 277, and supra, pp. 11 f.

beliefs and our attitudes towards action, towards each other and the world, do not, according to Richards, need to be so brought into correspondence with the widest facts of nature.

In the long run it must be equally true that emotional beliefs cannot be held in isolation any more successfully than can the intellectual. We must also perish if we fail to bring our emotive beliefs and actions into correspondence with the central and widest facts we know. But there seems to be no reason for believing with Richards that this cannot be done.

Despite his efforts, Richards seems to have fallen into a faculty psychology with feeling and knowing as separate mental categories. We can, to be sure, enjoy the imaginative aspects of poetry without any thought of their verification, in fact with complete understanding that these aspects cannot be verified. But it is not the unverifiable aspects of art which concern us to the point of emotion or of readiness to act. I can read King Lear without believing that it is historically verifiable that there was once a king of England named Lear, who had three daughters, one constant and loving, and two grossly ungrateful and cruel. Beliefs in the historical accuracy of this play are not what make it a tragedy. But it is quite impossible to read King Lear and be moved by it at all unless I believe very deeply that certain social and ethical relations ought to be, -- that is, that daughters should be grateful, that the truth should be told, that friends should be constant, and that cruelty is wrong. Without some such beliefs it will, I think, be scarcely possible to see the artistic structure of the play which is compounded of them. To be moved by Lear I must feel that my emotional beliefs stand in logical relation with other ideas and are not incompatible with the general and widest facts of nature.

To order "our attitudes to others and to the world" is too great a task for anything that I may hold to be a "pseudo-statement." My intellectual world cannot be so sharply separated from my emotional-active world. Whether the particular beliefs which move me are verifiable or not is a matter for time to show in each case. The point is that I must hold them to be verifiable, and so intellectual, if I am to be moved to action upon them. Richards grants that this is possible, for he holds that belief feelings are parasitic and ready to attach themselves to anything; but he asserts that this ought not to be. He thinks that it is not only possible but desirable to hold "emotive beliefs" or attitudes, even to the practical point of meeting our needs, without granting these attitudes any intellectual status whatever. But this Richards can do only by holding to two types of beliefs corresponding to his two types of the

functions of language, namely vague, objectless, and emotional (although practical) "beliefs" on the one hand, and referential scientific beliefs on the other. Thus he derives the right of the social, the possible, and the general to be held as intellectual beliefs. Only specific and verified facts may be believed.

But the field of the possible and the general is precisely where art and belief are most commonly associated. Certainly very few readers take Lear to be literally true; but every reader must, if the play is to mean anything to him, believe that what its characters do belongs to the general nature of right or of wrong.

Either, then, there is no problem of art and belief at all (beyond Richards' negative one of declaring that they ought not to be associated), or beliefs may somehow rightfully, that is, intellectually, attend the possible. If Richards' alternative is not to be accepted, this wider extension of belief must be further examined.

CHAPTER II

ON THE GENERAL NATURE OF BELIEF

"And what, then," asks Peirce, is belief?" He gives as one answer:

"Belief consists mainly in being deliberately prepared to adopt the formula believed in as the guide to action. If this be in truth the nature of belief, then undoubtedly the proposition believed in can itself be nothing but a maxim of conduct."¹

Belief, then, is preparation for conduct. It is a selected formula for action, a mode of procedure. Richards, as has been noted, grants the same definition to "scientific" beliefs, but there seems to be no reason why this trait does not belong to all beliefs that are, or may be, expressed. Religious and ethical beliefs, for example, are quite clearly rules for behaviour.

Under this interpretation it is important to note that beliefs are rules for action, and are not to be confused with the action itself. So, as Peirce goes on to say, this attitude of preparation involves thought at rest rather than thought in action. He says of belief:

"It is the demi-cadence which closes a musical phrase in the symphony of our intellectual life. We have seen that it has just these properties: First, it is something we are aware of; second, it appeases the irritation of doubt; and, third, it involves the establishment in our nature of a rule for action, or say for short, a habit. As it appeases the irritation of doubt, which is the motive for thinking, thought relaxes and comes to rest for a moment when belief is reached. But, since belief is a rule for action, the application of which involves further doubt and further thought, it is also a new starting-place for thought."²

Hence the important characteristic of belief is that it is a moment of orientation. It is a decision in Whitehead's use

¹Collected Papers (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1934), p. 21.

²Ibid., p. 255.

of the word, that is, it is one mode of action selected and cut off from other possible modes of action.

It follows from the opposition of belief to doubt that beliefs may be expressed in propositions. By belief in demons, for example, it is meant that the proposition "Demons exist" is held to be true. Yet it is important to note that although beliefs may be expressed in propositions, believing itself is not the proposition, but is the way in which the proposition is entertained. The same difference should be emphasized between beliefs and facts. Belief is concerned with action about facts or towards them. It is not itself fact nor to be mistaken for it. It is another stage of the learning process. There is a vector character about belief. As such it is directed to facts which are not vectors but are located points or supposedly located points. In view of this, Richards' advice that belief should be concerned only with facts is quite wasted. All belief is concerned with facts to some degree; at least until the locus of the fact is reached and it is proved or disproved. But when the point of verification is reached the function of belief in the "fact" is over. If the hypothesis is verified, the former belief is superseded by a new and stronger belief directed towards new instances. If it is disproved the old belief is also superseded by a new one, in this case to the effect that the formerly held "fact" is now known to have been not true. The old belief is then called mistaken but this is not to deny that in its capacity of belief it was headed towards verification or fact.

A belief, in short, is an hypothesis, as essential in science as elsewhere. For it is not true that science is concerned solely with verified references. Only under circumstances of complete determinism and omniscience could such a definition be true; and this is quite certainly not the case in science as we know it. Moreover were such to be the case there would be no function left for belief, since all thinking under such circumstances, if indeed there were any use left for thinking, would be knowing, not believing.

Somewhat the same distinction as that drawn between a belief and a fact, must also apply between believing and knowing. We know what has been located and verified; we believe what may be located and verified. This seems to be in accord with the common use of these words, for I say, for example, that I know, not that I believe, that I am writing this sentence, and I say that I believe that I shall write another. A belief, in other words, is a means of reaching towards what may be a fact; and a belief in facts is a belief that facts may be verified, i.e., found out to be true as supposed. Science, then, is concerned

with possible references as well as with verified references; and it is a function of belief to direct action towards such possible references.

To the extent that belief is concerned with the possible it must follow that it is associated with its correlate, doubt. And this seems to be actually the case, for there are beliefs of all degrees, from strongly held beliefs with a minimum of doubt which then become matters of "faith," to weak beliefs with a maximum of doubt. Moreover, it would be unduly limiting the reach of belief to require that all expectation be towards complete verification. There may be quite definite expectation of a range of verification, or of a possible verification. Belief may be pointed to fields which are definitely limited but within which there is understood to be room for doubt about the outcome. General beliefs are obviously beliefs of this nature, for they are concerned with the verification of certain aspects of events to the neglect of others; and it seems to be the case that complete specificity of belief is not possible. Yet beliefs in the general differ from beliefs in the possible in that in the former the range of verification is ignored or of no moment, while in the latter it is definitely recognized.

The kinds of possibility in which there may be belief appear to be various. I may believe, for example, in a range of variations; or I may direct my attention to one item in such a range as a possible example; or I may consider one such possible example as preferred or best for some purpose. The first type of possibility might be called mathematical, the second demonstrative, and the third normative. Art is chiefly concerned with beliefs of the last two types, for it is one of the functions of art to demonstrate what might be or what ought to be.

Of these three types of expectation, the third is probably the commonest, both because of habit and because of the practical need for action towards a selected goal. It is, as will be maintained, the field in which belief and art most commonly meet; since beliefs in norms are strong and persistent beliefs, and since the image of a norm is usually attained only by art.

If art and the beliefs in art are directed towards what is possible, then the right to believe in them must be the right of possibility or the right of hypothesis. If the beliefs in art are concerned with what is possibly better or with a norm of belief, then the right of such beliefs is the right of preference of one possibility as better for some purpose than others.

The problem of belief in the norms presented or suggested by art is twofold. There is first the question of the aesthetic warrant for the inclusion of beliefs in art; and second, the wider

problem of the ultimate right of belief in the values that art presents. Although the present essay is chiefly concerned with the first or aesthetic problem, the implication for it of the second or axiological problem cannot be ignored or denied. To do so would establish aesthetics as a unique or sui generis field, and it would deny the obvious effects of art upon other experience. Richards, for example, denies the right of belief in art, and yet believes that art is a very important good. But it is not clear that such a separation of the beliefs that are in art and belief about art can be maintained. The good that art does and the good that art shows must be not unlike. How they are alike, or unlike, requires a closer examination of the kinds of belief that are involved in art.

CHAPTER III

THE KINDS OF BELIEF INVOLVED IN ART

In place of Richards' dualism of beliefs, on the one hand cognitive and referential, and on the other, emotive and objectless, it is here suggested that the beliefs concerned with art be classified as literal, social, and formal, each of these types having both cognitive and emotive aspects.

The literal beliefs in art are the beliefs about the setting. It is usually in this sense that art objects are believed to be "true" or "true to life."

The formal beliefs are tenets about the structure of art and art forms. It is in this sense that a work of art is believed to be "right."

The social beliefs are convictions held about the possible, the universal, or what ought to be. It is in this sense that a work of art may be thought to have "meaning."¹

In so far as a distinction of form and content can be made in art, it seems clear that the literal and social beliefs are those most involved in content. Distinction also is necessary between beliefs in art and beliefs about art. Generally speaking formal beliefs are convictions about art, and literal beliefs are convictions about the content of art. The beliefs represented

¹This scheme may be compared as follows with the Richards system and with that H. Feigl derived from it ("The Psychophysical Problem," Philosophy of Science, I [1934], 421 f.)

Classification:

according to <u>Richards</u>	according to <u>Feigl</u>	here <u>proposed</u>
cognitive	factual formal	literal formal
emotive	pictorial intuitional motivational	possible social general normative

in art are for the most part social and general. Yet any art object may become the source of any of these types of belief; and any type of belief may inspire any other.

1. The literal beliefs

As noted above, a literal belief in King Lear is a belief in the play's historical accuracy. In fact it can only be literal convictions of this kind which Richards means to deny when he says in Science and Poetry that we need and must have no beliefs in order to read this play.¹ Likewise I do not literally believe in Donne's Holy Sonnet VII if I am not convinced that the dead souls will awaken and go to their scattered bodies just as the poem says. If I literally believe in this poem, I must think that Donne has somehow obtained prior and certain knowledge of this event. It is to this sort of belief in this poem that so many of Richards' pupils seem to have made emotional dissent.

No small amount of literal belief is devoted to the verification of titles, and observers are prone to expect that the work of art ought to verify the expectations raised by its name. Thus the name of a work, casually added by the artist as an after-thought and as a convenient label, may assume in the mind of the spectator a reverse relation and become itself legislative to the work of art.

If, then, I literally believe in a work of art, I must think that its setting is no longer a matter of trust or expectation but of knowledge. More than being merely verifiable, it is already verified. Clearly, if I look in art for verification of this sort, I am committed to the notion that it is the function of art to be imitative and never imaginative, specific and never generic. What I want to hear is a "true story." "Now this," as we say, "actually happened, believe it or not." Belief, in short, no longer matters; we have the facts.

Simple and mistaken as this notion of art may seem to be, it is what appears to prevent literal minded people from enjoying imaginative art; and it appears to be a somewhat too exclusive concern with belief as specific, or with belief as knowledge, that has prompted Richards to make his sharp separation of poetry and science. It is without question a distinction often made, -- for example, by people who are revolted by experiments in painting such as El Greco's distortions, because they are not "accurate."

Moreover, such literal belief in art is hardly something that we have "lost" in a scientific age, for it can never have

¹Op. cit., p. 72.

been very seriously or widely applied. Even in some of the earliest art forms, such as primitive negro sculpture, there is a very obvious attempt to be not literal. The artists of the great Christian period had but slight concern for historical accuracy, nor were they bound to precision of natural setting. Goethe in "Conversations with Eckerman" points out that in a landscape by Rubens there are shadows coming from two directions. Goethe says:

"The figures cast their shadows into the picture; the group of trees on the contrary, cast theirs towards the spectator. . . . It is by this that Rubens proves himself great, and shows to the world that he, with a free spirit, stands above Nature, and treats her conformably to his high purposes. The double light is certainly a violent expedient, and you certainly say that it is contrary to Nature. But if it is contrary to Nature, I still say that it is higher than Nature; I say that it is the bold stroke of the master, by which he, in a genial manner, proclaims to the world that art is not entirely subject to natural necessities, but has laws of its own."¹

Yet the setting, if the art object has a setting, cannot be entirely free. Goethe goes on to say that the artist must copy nature faithfully in the details, -- that is the lesser details -- but that in the "higher regions" he may have recourse to fictions. But the reverse procedure is also common, as in impressionism or in the work of El Greco, in which the minute details, many of them at least, if taken by themselves are all wrong, but the "higher" effect is "right." If art is to be communicable, the literalists must be somewhat right, and the art object must contain some elements that are accurately imitative and historical. There must be harmony and contrast in the recognition of art, as well as in the forms of art. Actually of course, there will always be recognition of some sort as long as there is perception of qualities; and a work of art may have as its aim the portrayal of a pattern of such qualities, without anything else in that pattern being recognizable as an element from other experience. Some of the tendencies of "modern" art have been in this direction.

Therefore it seems to be clearly the case that a work of art does not usually present (and is in no case under obligation to present) a setting that is scientifically accurate and verifiable. To do so would deny to art the play of fancy and the joy of surprise. Science as description and art as representation

¹A. M. Brooks (ed.), Readings in Art Appreciation (Boston: Marshall Jones & Co., 1931), p. 209.

have different existential concerns, and so different ranges of freedom. So it is an error to mistake the literal descriptions of art for those of science. Literal beliefs (and disbeliefs) are, or should be, as Richards insists, largely beside the point in the appreciation of art; although it is probable that such beliefs have always had less part in art than Richards seems to believe.

2. Beliefs about form

In every type of art form there have arisen formal beliefs about the structure of art itself. These are the chief aim and bulwark of criticism. If literal beliefs are the background of naïve criticism, technical criticism is built on form. That convictions of this sort may attain emotional status as beliefs involving readiness to act is often demonstrated by popular disapproval of new art forms. Witness for example the uproar said to have attended the first performance of Cesar Franck's D Minor Symphony and of Stravinsky's Rites of Spring.

Beliefs about form, and behaviour inspired by beliefs about form, may become very like literal beliefs and the behaviour inspired by them. They may involve the same major errors of giving primary attention to details rather than to the whole, and of denying to art its function to create and to surprise. And, quite as tenacious and tyrannous as other beliefs, they may strengthen and perpetuate social beliefs with which they are customarily associated. Formal beliefs like literal beliefs are beliefs that may be concerned with a work of art, but not, in usual cases, beliefs that appear as such in it.

3. Social beliefs and beliefs in the possible

Thus a work of art may satisfy expectations about setting and form, but the expectations it arouses are beliefs in the social and the possible. It is this sort of belief that Aristotle held to be the chief concern of the poet. In De Poetica he says of this aim of the poet:

"From what we have said it will be seen that the poet's function is to describe, not the thing that has happened, but the kind of thing that might happen, i.e., what is possible as being probable or necessary. . . . Hence poetry is something more philosophic and of graver import than history, since its statements are of the nature rather of universals, whereas those of history are singulars. . . . The universal is the kind of thing which a person

of certain character would necessarily or probably say or do. And this is what poetry aims at, though it gives proper names to the persons. The particular is what Alcibiades did or suffered."¹

It is this belief in the possible and the general, this concern not with what the actual Alcibiades did, nor even entirely with what the Alcibiades in the poem did, but with what the Alcibiades in the poem might, or ought, or ought not, to have done, that is important in the appreciation of poetry. I may accept the setting of Donne's Holy Sonnet VII as entirely fanciful; and I may not expect, as Donne presumably did, that there ever will be an actual Day of Judgment; but unless I believe with Donne that repentance is as good as or better than ritual pardon, this sonnet will be meaningless to me. Without fairly well-established opinions about the ways in which people ought to get along with each other and the world, nearly all literature, and nearly all of what is usually called "representative" art, is unintelligible. I may accept most of the literal setting of a poem as unverifiable, indeed for the most part never consider the matter of its verification; but I must, in order to understand the poem, accept most of the social and ethical beliefs as verifiable (i.e., verifiable in the sense that they present universals under which particular instances might be rightly classed).

Unless I believed that negroes had the full rights of citizens, and that it was manful of them to protest the loss of these rights, it would not have been possible for me to have understood the propaganda play Stevedore, -- much less to have become excited about it, and so far, ready to act upon its beliefs. Disbelief (which is not, it should be noted, the absence of belief) might also lead to understanding and further conviction; for it is conceivable that listeners might sympathize with the employers in this play and feel that the tragedy that overtook the barricaded negroes was "justice." Yet such listeners would also have seen the play through social beliefs, and would also have been moved to some readiness to action. It would scarcely be possible to see this play as a play without social beliefs of some kind.

It must further be noted that such beliefs gain strength with generality. If I am not merely interested in the wrongs of some particular negro, nor merely in the wrongs of negroes, but in the wrongs of all oppressed peoples, my readiness to believe is enhanced and my consequent readiness to act is strengthened. For belief is general expectation, -- at its widest, -- faith,

¹The Works of Aristotle, Vol. XI, Part 3, De Poetica, trans. Douglas Bywater (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1924), 1451.

which may become so sure of the generality of its truth that it will scorn apparent disproof in particular instances.

It is because of this strength, resulting from generality, that it seems to be true that the social beliefs in art are much less the subject of inventive imagination than are the details of the setting; and so most literature is concerned with giving a novel setting to familiar social tenets. Myths and folk tales afford an extreme instance. The chief pleasure that people take in these stories probably consists not so much in believing that such fanciful folk exist, as in recognizing the familiar structure of human beliefs -- (that virtue should be rewarded, and vice punished, etc.) -- in a novel and imaginative setting.

To use a term of Richards, social and universal beliefs are more "weighted" than specific or literal beliefs. And because of this weight, this sort of belief is of much more effect in the acceptance or rejection of art objects, even to the point, as will be noted later, of censorship. According to Richards, it is only the "intellectual or scientific" beliefs that are so weighted, and this only when they are logically connected with the most general ideas about nature. "Whether," he says, "an intellectual belief is justified is entirely a matter of its logical place in the largest, most completely ordered system of ideas we can attain to."¹ Intellectual beliefs, then, are weighted because of their real or supposed generality, as are social beliefs. The point at issue is whether the social beliefs should have the weight they bear, i.e., whether they may have a verifiable place "in the largest and most completely ordered system of ideas." Unless the social and ethical beliefs may have some such verification, it can hardly be asserted with any conviction, as is done by Richards, that poetry is good for us and should be retained as an instrument to order our widest relationships. That poetry and the beliefs in it may order our attitudes to one another and the world is clear. It remains to be considered how this comes about in terms of belief and art, and what there is about art and the beliefs it inspires that may give it a logical place in our widest system of ideas about the universe and its working. Such a place can probably be best demonstrated through the social ideas in art and the social ideas that art may inspire. Our widest system of ideas about the universe is clearly a matter to involve the most general ideas and the most general terms; and the most general terms are those that are most obviously social.

¹Practical Criticism, p. 276.

4. The above types of belief not completely separable

In the above classification of the beliefs in art, it is plain that the terms "social" and "general" and "possible" are applied to the third group merely as a matter of emphasis. As maintained in the previous chapter it is doubtful if any belief can be purely factual or formal. Still more is this doubtful in the case of the beliefs in art. Any tenet about the literal accuracy or the formal rightness of a work of art itself implies a norm and a general standard to which conformity is made. On the other hand it is equally plain that no belief in art can be purely general or possible, if it may be expressed as a belief. It must be attached to some aspect of the form or setting which is thereby given a wider psychological or sociological extension. All that can be said is that the formal and factual beliefs tend to be more narrowly located than the social or generic.

Nor can these kinds of belief in and about art be precisely separated in any actual act of art observation. Thus in Donne's sonnet the rise in power and emphasis of the octet here shown with great skill in the staccato trumpet sounds of the long catalogue of disasters -- "war, dearth, age, agues, tyrannies, despair, chance, law" -- and the calm of the sestet -- "Here on this lowly ground" -- satisfy the customary formal expectations that a sonnet should so rise and fall in mood, and satisfy whatever literal expectations may attach to the picture, as well as the general hope of calm after disaster. Not only the words are given form but the meanings and beliefs. In this case the beliefs and belief-attitudes appear to be not merely carried in the form of the sonnet as in a vehicle, but to be modified and enhanced by it.

The basis of a theory of belief and art must be an investigation of the factors that make such a relation possible or likely. Such an investigation requires at this point some review of the ways in which belief and art seem to be incompatible, and of the ways in which they appear to be analogous. This survey made we may attempt to fit these elements together.

CHAPTER IV

SOME GENERAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BELIEF AND ART

In at least two traits the experience of art not only seems to differ from that of belief but to be actually antagonistic to it. These traits are the immediacy of art, and its spontaneity, both to be contrasted with the expectation of belief, and its conservatism.

1. Belief is expectation; art is realization

Speaking not of art and belief, but of the realization of the truth of propositions in immediate experience, Whitehead says, "But in all analysis there is one supreme factor which is apt to be omitted, namely, the mode of togetherness. The nexus includes the eternal object in the mode of realization. Whereas in the true proposition the togetherness of the nexus and the eternal object belongs to the mode of abstract possibility. The eternal object is then united to the nexus as a mere 'predicate.' Thus a nexus and a proposition belong to different categories of being. Their identification is mere nonsense. It is nonsense of the same sort as the fashionable identification of physical fact with formulae of pure mathematics."¹

In Whiteheadian terms a "proposition" is "an abstract possibility"; it "is a notion about actualities, a suggestion, a theory, a supposition about things." Thus any expressed belief is a proposition. A "nexus" is a grouping of actual occasions characterized by mutual immanencies, i.e., by order in the most general sense. So a work of art is a form of nexus. Hence so far as a belief and a work of art belong to different categories of being, the belief to abstract possibility and the work of art to realization, their identification, like that of these categories, is "nonsense."

Belief is expectation and concerns what is not yet realized. Were it realized there would be no longer any necessity for belief; we believe only what may be to some degree questioned. The alternative to belief is doubt, not fact. A work of art on

¹A. N. Whitehead, Adventures of Ideas (New York: Macmillan Co., 1933), pp. 313 f.

the other hand is realization. That is the most important thing about it. Its reason for being lies in the fact that it is culminated, completed, presented as a whole. So a work of art may inspire belief, may transmit belief, may even realize belief; but it cannot be belief, for belief and art have different modes of existence. Art exists as experience; but beliefs, like the propositions in which they be expressed, "only exist as entertained in experience."¹ Art lies in the so-called "given," but belief in the implications of the given.

Yet, as will be considered in the next chapter, this difference although plausible, is not, in practice, as fundamental as might appear; for as Whitehead maintains, the present cannot be enjoyed or realized wholly as present, and immediacy is modified by the expectations which it entertains. The immediate enjoyment of Donne's sonnet lies not only in the immediate form, but in the modification of that form by the expectation of a possible day of Judgment or of a possible repentance.

2. Belief is conservative; art is changing

The spontaneity of art is probably even more the enemy of belief than is the immediacy of art. However spontaneous beliefs may have been at their point of origin, such spontaneity is thereafter necessarily denied, and, once the belief has become a habit, combatted. The stronger a belief becomes, the more jealous is it likely to be of its temporal extension; and while it may admit discovery it is prone to deny invention. "Belief," says Peirce, "is not a momentary mode of consciousness, it is a habit of mind essentially enduring for some time, and mostly (at least) unconscious; and like other habits, it is (until it meets with some surprise that begins its dissolution) perfectly self-satisfied."² Yet however much belief may become a habit, it is preserved from monotony by the fact that it is always expecting fulfillment. Its subject matter remains interesting in so far as it has not yet become a matter of fact. Art, which is actual, must escape monotony by variation. It is the delight of art to be spontaneous. From spontaneity, says Whitehead, arise freshness, zest, and extra keenness of intensity. It is not merely a search for perfection, but a search for new perfections, for "even perfection will not bear the tedium of indefinite repetition."³ The "flower" of drama, according to Seami Motokiyo, speaking of the Nō plays, "consists

¹Ibid., p. 314.

²Op. cit., p. 279.

³Op. cit., p. 332.

in forcing on the audience an emotion which they do not expect."¹ Even forms of art that present well-established social beliefs, must seek surprise in variations of form and setting. When these latter pall, art may abandon the belief, or it may attack the belief, or the art form itself may die. In general it seems to be true that art cannot remain unchanged as long as can belief. A curious case in point is the difficulty that nearly all art finds in changing against beliefs in standard art forms.

3. Beliefs are blunt, art concerned with grace and beauty

Still a third characteristic in which art experience differs from belief is that of grace and delicacy. The importance, the weight, and the bluntness of beliefs often ill accord with the delicacy that art and beauty may show. For these reasons, social beliefs are most often found in comedy or tragedy where bluntness is an essential aspect. Delicacy and grace, like spontaneity, are indifferent to belief if not destructive of it. To be sure, rococo and other decorative arts have served to deck out and even to symbolize certain types of class distinction, but in these cases the decoration has been used as itself the expression of indifference. In nature grace of movement and delicacy of pattern seem as far as possible removed from purposive beliefs, and there is no reason why their representation or invention in art should involve them.

Thus in so far as beauty and form are the whole aim of a work of art, it need have no traffic with definite or social beliefs. But beauty by no means need be the sole aim of art or even in all cases an apparent aim. It is certainly no apparent aim in King Lear or in Goya's Disasters of War, although a beautiful form might be extracted from these works. In general it seems to be true that works of art like the two just mentioned have acquired strength, intensity, and contrast from the beliefs that are associated with them. Yet strong social beliefs are not the only source of strength and intensity, as much great art, music in particular, shows.

Belief, then, is conservative; it is practical in the sense that it expects things from the future; it is forthright and blunt; and it is ready for action. Art is creative; it expects nothing and so is impractical; it is chiefly characterized by form, and usually beauty; and it has no program. For these reasons beliefs have so often shown themselves inimical to adventure in art, and impatient with its concern with immediacy and

¹Quoted by Richards in Practical Criticism, p. 252.

beauty. Yet since, notwithstanding these differences, beliefs may associate themselves with art to the apparent strength of both, it remains to be considered what may be the likenesses of art and belief that resolve these antagonisms.

CHAPTER V

SOME ANALOGIES IN BELIEF AND ART

1. Belief and art are both concerned with possibilities

It has been maintained that belief, and particularly belief in art, is directed towards possibility rather than towards fact. It is chiefly the function of believing to hold a possibility in view as a course of action where the facts have not been ascertained. Now it is also a function of art to so present possibilities. As Richards says of tragedy, "Tragedy . . . is still the form under which the mind may most clearly and freely contemplate the human situation, its issues unclouded, its possibilities revealed."¹ Thus art as well as belief may be demonstrative, even prophetic. This is the sense in which both art and belief have been held by those who are deeply convinced of the social function of art. Julius F. Hecker says in Moscow Dialogues, "The productions of the artist must be prophetic. He must show what the latent social and psychological forces once let loose can become, if properly guided. Thus the artist precreates the future in his image."² Yet not only may art have this prophetic use, its very enjoyment may depend upon the anticipations stimulated.

In the preceding chapter, art was said to be immediate, and belief to be concerned with the safety of the future, a safety neglected by art for the sake of the present. Yet, as Whitehead admits, "the separation is not so easy. For the inevitable anticipation adds to the present a qualitative element which profoundly affects its whole qualitative harmony."³ Thus the immediacy of art may require for its realization and enjoyment a much wider temporal span than the apparent one covered by the process of perceiving it. It may in fact deliberately reach towards the future for expectations to heighten the immediate enjoyment or use, so that a work of art may be compounded of anticipations.

¹Principles of Literary Criticism, p. 69.

²Op. cit., p. 234.

³Adventures of Ideas, p. 346.

2. Art and belief are definite

Art claims our attention not only because of the expectations that may be concerned in it, but because it offers the satisfaction that lies in definiteness. A work of art is circumscribed for attention; and a belief is likewise circumscribed since it is always a choice from other possibilities. Compared with the background of uncertain experience, says Whitehead, both are clear and distinct:

"Thus it is Appearance which in consciousness is clear and distinct, and it is Reality which lies dimly in the background with its details hardly to be distinguished in consciousness. What leaps into conscious attention is a mass of presuppositions about Reality rather than the intuitions of Reality itself."¹

Both belief and art give us presuppositions about Reality, and such presuppositions are satisfying because they involve at least relative rest from activity and reflection. Both when we entertain a belief and when we give attention to a work of art we have gained a measure of escape from uncertainty or fear. Art offers an experience consummated, belief a choice made, -- both a refuge from perplexities.² It is mainly because of this common structure of decision (as Whitehead notes, of that which is "cut off") that art is so well fitted to communicate beliefs. In this respect the patterns of belief and art coincide.

So both art and belief have been called "fictions" in the sense that they reach imaginatively beyond present practical experience into a definitely controlled field in which the possibilities are arbitrarily limited, and which is therefore open to perfection. According to Whitehead it is this very artificiality and finiteness of art which constitutes its service to civilization. "It exhibits, for consciousness a finite fragment of human effort achieving its own perfection within its own limits. . . . A million sunsets will not spur on men towards civilization. It

¹Ibid., p. 348.

²Cf. J. Maritain. "Hence the despotic and all absorbing power of art, as also its astonishing power of soothing: it frees from every human care, it establishes the artifex, artist or artisan in a world apart, cloistered, defined and absolute, in which to devote all the strength and intelligence of his manhood to the service of the thing he is making. This is true of every art; the ennui of living and willing ceases on the threshold of every studio or workshop." (Art and Scholasticism, trans. J. F. Scanlon [New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1930], p.7.)

requires Art to evoke into consciousness the finite perfections which lie ready for human achievement."¹

But if art and belief are marked by finite perfection and rest, it is rest that is oriented and directed; they involve not action but readiness and direction for action. As Peirce has noted, belief is an intermediate stage between actions, and art may serve the same purpose.

3. Belief and art are characterized by emotion

It is this readiness for action which is not itself action which is one of the main factors in producing the relatively high emotional content of both the perception of art and the entertainment of belief, for emotion is an organic readjustment directed towards action and often most obvious when that action is frustrated or postponed.

According to Dewey it is only through such postponement that the manifestation of emotion becomes aesthetic expression. "The resistance offered to immediate expression of emotion," says Dewey, "is precisely that which compels it to assume rhythmic form."² In this manner emotional energy becomes the creative force in art, for "It evokes, assembles, accepts, and rejects memories, images, and observations, and works them into a whole toned throughout by the same immediate emotional feeling."³ Lest it be thought that this is to add another element to artistic experience, it should be noted that emotion, like form, is not a separate thing. "Experience," Dewey says, "is emotional but there are no separate things called emotions in it."⁴

The comparable place of emotional energy in belief is evident, for here also it may evoke, assemble, accept, and reject memories, images, and observations, and work them into a whole. Yet although comparable on this point, they are not thereby to be proved identical. For a work of art may be the production of emotions for their own sake; while beliefs are, at least ostensibly, held not for their own emotional value but for their supposed truth value. It is some realization of this difference in intent which arouses resentment in the face of obvious manipulation of beliefs through their emotional values, as in propaganda.

¹Op. cit., p. 348.

²Art as Experience, p. 156.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 42.

But not only are art and belief comparable in their common possession of a relatively high proportion of emotional energy, because for the most part they do not directly issue in overt action; such emotional force may be the most effective means of transition from art to belief and belief to art. Such a transition Whitehead describes under the doctrine of the Conformation of Feeling. In Whitehead's system emotion is one type of subjective form,¹ and such subjective forms may persist from occasion to occasion. "There is," he says, "a continuity between the subjective form of the immediate past occasion and the subjective form of its primary prehension in the origination of the new occasion. In the process of synthesis of the many basis prehensions modifications enter. But the subjective forms of the immediate past are continuous with the present."² In this way the same subjective form, attitude, or feeling may be applied to different but temporally contiguous objective contents. Thus a type of subjective form stimulated by an art object may be transmitted to a belief expressed or suggested by that art object. Richards apparently has the same sort of transfer in mind when he says that belief-feelings are "parasitic." It is also what he means when he says that the experience of appreciating art may develop an attitude of balance which can then be successfully applied to ordinary experience.

Some general transfer of this sort undoubtedly occurs; yet, an emotion experienced in art appreciation may attach itself to a subsequently perceived objective content in such a manner as to impel the percipient towards action rather than balance. The transfer may take place with all the more force if the objective content is also an integral part of the art experience. If the conveyance of subjective form is proportionately high, as in music for example, it may take very little encouragement for the emotion aroused to make the objective content into an integral part of the art experience. So may the words of a song and the beliefs of a song be given emotional strength by the music. In this way a transfer of feeling may be deliberately planned since it is the peculiar capacity of art that it may incite a desired subjective form by the use of appropriate objective content. So a readiness to believe, or even a firm belief, may be engendered from

¹Subjective form is the manner of entertainment of a datum. "There are many species of subjective forms, such as emotions, valuations, purposes, aversions, aversions, consciousness, etc." (Process and Reality [New York: Macmillan Co., 1929], p. 35.)

²Adventures of Ideas, p. 235. Italics not in original.

aesthetic attention; and such readiness may be transferred from belief to belief.

The fact, noted by Peirce, that belief involves thought at rest rather than thought at action permits not only its ready interchange with art but a transition from belief to belief. For if thinking rests in belief, so belief may be said to rest in attitudes. Thus it might be said that if belief is a readiness to act, then an attitude is a readiness to believe. It is because art may transmit such attitudes of readiness to believe even more easily than it may transmit beliefs themselves, that it may become a short cut to belief, and so the dangerous and insidious foe of thinking that it often is. It seems to be such attitudes that Richards has in mind when he speaks of "emotive-beliefs," "objectless beliefs," "pseudo-statements," "belief-feelings," and the like. I think that it may help to clarify the problem if the term "belief" be reserved for more or less definitely formulated expectations (something, as Peirce says, "that we are aware of"), and the term "attitude" for the habit of mind which may accompany such a formulation and even persist beyond it. As has been shown, "attitude" in this sense is quite comparable to Whitehead's "subjective form" or "affective tone," and as an underlying pervasive quality it is also not unlike what Dewey calls "qualitative thought."

Somewhat at the risk of multiplying entities, one might go further and posit back of "attitude," "mood" (e.g., a mood of joy or grief) as an even less active and definite state than attitude.¹ A mood would be very nearly objectless in the sense of being without conscious formulation; but it would be prone to seek objects, that is, "parasitic" as Richards says of belief-feelings. Ordinary usage gives some justification for this interpretation since we speak of "attitudes towards" some thing or other, but not of "moods towards."

Although attitude as a quality of thought is most obvious in social and ethical beliefs, since these have commonly a noticeable emotional content and are prone to become matters of habit, yet such quality cannot be denied to beliefs (or thoughts) of any kind. "The immediate existence of quality," says Dewey, "and of dominant pervasive quality, is the background, the point of

¹Yet C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards in The Meaning of Meaning say, "It is not necessary to know what things are in order to take up fitting attitudes towards them," p. 271. (Italics not in original.) What this sentence may mean depends upon what is meant by "knowing," but if unfitting attitudes are possible towards things, as seems, according to every evidence, to be the case, then at least subsequent knowledge of some kind does seem necessary. In short, attitudes cannot be completely objectless.

departure and the regulative principle of all thinking."¹ On the basis of quality, then, no clean distinction can be made between emotive beliefs and intellectual or referential beliefs. "The opposition of quality as immediate and sensuous to relation as purely mediate and intellectual," says Dewey further, "is false in general theory, psychological and philosophical. In fine art it is absurd, since the force of an art product depends upon complete interpenetration of the two."²

4. The concern of belief and art with value

With belief may be transferred value, for if not all beliefs are about values, yet all values include belief. If I say that I value something, I imply belief in it. Although the reverse may conceivably be not true, yet it is generally true that in the case of social or religious beliefs or of beliefs about standards, ethical or artistic, a belief involves a valuation. When I say that I believe in a certain procedure, what I mean is that I believe that such a procedure will be more (or less) valuable than others that might be proposed.

Valuation like belief is concerned with what is not now existent, for even if I value (i.e. "believe in") what I now have, it is with its possible future as existent or not that I am concerned. When I value a thing, I choose its continuance rather than its non-continuance. Moreover, whether or not value can be reduced to interests, needs, and desires, there seems to be no question, that, like belief, it is largely concerned with them.

The connection of art with value is often as intimate. Art is, as Richards says, a storehouse of values. It is a record of things chosen. If belief is for the most part concerned with comparative values; art may be said to present an indicative value. It may present a process of valuation, that is an expression of what, according to the artist, ought or ought not to be, or it may present a valuation made; and in any case it may become itself a valued thing and so sought as a "value."

It will be noted that neither beliefs nor values are limited to "subjective form" but may become objective content. So I may value values, and value the valuation of values, and so on. This seems to be especially true of the valuations preserved in art.

¹Philosophy and Civilization (New York: J. D. Minton Balch and Co., 1931), p. 116.

²Art as Experience, p. 121.

I believe that this possibility of a regress of valuation explains in part Richards' problem about the dissenting appreciation of poetry. It seems at least possible to value a poet's attitude of belief as expressed in a religious poem more than one may value the belief itself; as it is not difficult to admire devotion to causes with which we do not agree, if that devotion is expressed in a form which may itself become a value. To be sure, through the process of the conformation of feelings, such secondary admiration puts the original content in a more favorable light. Thus, as is well known, an original "value" may become more valuable through its expression in art.

From this it follows that the ultimate right of belief in a value presented by art depends upon at least two determinations, its original status and the added aesthetic value that may be lent to it by the work of art. Clearly this produces a situation so complex that it is scarcely possible to say, as does Richards, that one must have no beliefs in art, or on the other hand that one must. Whether art discovers values in ordinary experience, or whether it creates unwarranted values and beliefs in values which are thereafter attached to ordinary experience, is a matter that will have to be decided for every case. Yet some general determination may be made of the manner in which aesthetic value is lent by art to the beliefs included in it.

5. A summary of this chapter

Belief and art seem to be alike in that they both are concerned with the demonstration of possibilities, and in that they both have a certain definiteness resulting from thought and action relatively at rest. It also follows from the latter point they are both prone to have an emotional content relatively high. The choices represented by art and belief tend to be normative and to inspire norms of choice. They are therefore largely concerned with values and are indeed the principal repositories of them. Since art is so concerned with value it may itself value value, and so enhance, create, or warp values.

CHAPTER VI

THE INCLUSION OF BELIEFS IN ART

The analogies between the experiences of art and of believing which have been pointed out in the last chapter tend to establish the aesthetic warrant for the use of beliefs in art; as the differences previously listed tend to diminish that warrant. Yet if the descriptions of belief and art here given are correct there still remain the more specifically aesthetic problems of the manner in which beliefs are included in art, and of the cost, to belief or to art, of such a use. Belief may be like art, in certain ways, and art like belief; yet, in its widest extension, belief is not identical with art, and art is not identical with belief. What happens, then, when they are put together?

The question just proposed is an aspect of the problem of form and content, for if a belief is held to be included in a work of art, it must be there as content; and the specifically artistic aspect of the work is then its form. What is to be investigated is the relation of belief as content to art as form.

It is a common experience that social beliefs may be recognized as such in a work of art. For example, I have beliefs about the rights of negroes; and I recognized elements of these beliefs in the play Stevedore. Presumably the play was an artistic experience and my beliefs in the matter were not. The fact of the case then seems to be that I recognized non-artistic elements, that is, beliefs about the rights of oppressed peoples, in a work of art.

But it was furthermore the case that these beliefs emerged strengthened from this experience, and that the conflict of beliefs involved, heightened, if it did not actually constitute, the aesthetic event. This play, then, may be said to have consisted of formed beliefs, rather than of form and beliefs, for if the latter were the case it should have been possible to separate both the beliefs and the form without injury to either. Yet the form in this case, in so far as it could be separated, would be an inert thing, representable only by symbols or by spatial pattern, and quite without power to incite the feelings inspired by the play. Form, in this instance at least, is not an added entity; it is what is done with the elements presented. This

requires that the elements involved, i.e., beliefs, themselves possessed feeling capacity which was intensified by the arrangement given them in the form of the play. "If this is generally the case, as I think may be demonstrated, form in art may be described as an intensification, an arrangement of elements, themselves not inert, that will increase their feeling capacity. Dewey says something of the sort when he declares that "the esthetic . . . is the clarified and intensified development of traits that belong to every normally complete experience,"¹ and Whitehead when he says that "An intense experience is an aesthetic fact."²

It is evident that if the form of a play or other work of art is to be considered as an arrangement which intensifies feeling, rather than creates it, the elements of the play must possess some aesthetic character, and the form of the play must be not entirely unlike them. If beliefs are the content, there must be something aesthetic about the beliefs concerned, and something about the form of the art to strengthen them. Applied generally, this description means that any work of art may then be a form of forms or a pattern of patterns. The regress here implied finds its solution only in the claim of aesthetic possibility for all experience.

That all experience does have such aesthetic capacity is Dewey's claim in Art as Experience. Here he maintains that any experience that is consummated is thereby aesthetic. An aesthetic experience is what Dewey calls "an experience" by which he means an experience that has run to fulfillment and not merely ceased. For Dewey aesthetics is the satisfaction of attainment, and there can be no joy in attainment unless the issue has been in question. "Life itself," he says, "consists of phases in which the organism falls out of step with the march of surrounding events and then recovers unison with it -- either through effort or by some happy chance."³ All aesthetic experience is thus a sort of dialectic, the surmounting of a contrast; and every contrast surmounted is an aesthetic experience. Whitehead comes to a somewhat like conclusion but with opposite emphasis. "All aesthetic experience," says Whitehead, "is feeling arising out of the realization of contrast under identity."⁴ For Dewey the aesthetic feeling arises in the attainment of identity after conflict; for Whitehead it is

¹Art as Experience, p. 46.

²Process and Reality, p. 426.

³Art as Experience, p. 14.

⁴Process and Reality, p. 427.

the realization of contrast in the identity attained, but for both it is an intensifying of the elements of ordinary experience. Aesthetic possibility would be denied only to the hypothetical conditions of chaos or of complete monotony.

Ultimately this claim of aesthetic capacity for all experience and the elements of all experience must imply the capacity of colors and sounds to inspire aesthetic feeling. As Whitehead says:

"We enjoy the green foliage of the spring greenly; we enjoy the sunset with an emotional pattern including among its elements the colours and the contrasts of the vision. It is this that makes Art possible: it is this that procures the glory of perceived nature. For if the subjective form of reception be not conformal to the objective sensa, then the values of the percept would be at the mercy of the chance make-up of the other components in that experience."¹

The two most obvious alternatives to such a reduction are either that the aesthetic feeling is entirely subjective and arbitrary, and so uninfluenced by the so-called aesthetic object, or that the elements in the aesthetic object (or work of art) are themselves inert but that the feeling is created, not merely intensified, by the form. The first standpoint leads to all the difficulties of aesthetic subjectivism, chiefly the problem of communication. Despite the disputing of tastes it seems to be a fairly safe assumption that art does communicate. Otherwise there could be no such assertion as that by Richards that art stores values, no discussion, in fact, of art at all. The second standpoint, namely that feeling is a creation by the form of art out of elements themselves without feeling capacity is the more usual alternative; but this likewise runs into major difficulties. Not only does it make the genesis of artistic form inexplicable, but it implies, plainly in the face of the facts, that artist and art are indifferent to their materials, and that the same artistic effect may be produced by any material. It assumes, in short, that a contrast of complete indifferences is possible.

But if the elements of a work of art, such as colors and sounds, have aesthetic capacity, it is clear that such organized items as beliefs must have even more. As has already been pointed out, a belief is an experience brought to culmination. It is a problem decided, a contrast resolved. A belief, for example, in the rights of oppressed peoples as in Stevadore has aesthetic capacity in that it already is marked by a feeling of identity in contrast, that is, by a belief in the identical

¹Adventures of Ideas, pp. 321 f.

feelings held by contrasted peoples. Such a belief is an intensification already at hand for the use of art, a pattern of sense already charged with a determined feeling. Social beliefs of this type are aesthetic aggregates. For this reason it is notably easier to construct a moving work of art from widely held social beliefs than it is from less well organized material. For the same reason if a work of art does little more than transmit a belief, and furnishes small contrast and spontaneity of its own, it will hardly outlive the beliefs it transmits.

Every work of art is probably a very intricate complex of aesthetic aggregates; and in a work of art containing a definite belief these aesthetic fields are rather clearly grouped, first around the aesthetic capacities of the belief, and second around the contrasts and harmonies which the work of art constructs about the belief. It is in this second field of contrast that some of the differences heretofore listed between art and belief may be resolved. For if belief is concerned with the future and art with the present, then art may present that future (literally, make it present) in contrast to other present experience; if belief is conservative and art spontaneous, then art may lend interest to belief by giving it spontaneity of form and setting; and if beliefs are blunt, art may give them grace and form.

If a work of art containing beliefs is thus formed of included bodies which are themselves aesthetic wholes, it follows that there may be levels of aesthetic understanding. It is obvious that primary understanding must involve the form of the work as a whole but there may well be appreciation of a sort that misses this primary comprehension. Aesthetic understanding of the structure of the whole may often be difficult as in such serial works of art as a symphony or a long poem. In cases of strong emotional attachment to beliefs expressed in art, attention to those beliefs may neglect the central structure of the work.

Yet the beliefs expressed in art may be shared and yet held in perspective. That this can be done is due to the detachment which art may contribute to belief. In any art object which is more than the bare transmission of a belief, the beliefs presented become themselves the objects of new contrasts, no matter how favorable. By the very act of exemplification a belief is given perspective and detachment. Such detachment is most readily attained from beliefs that are either very broad or very narrow. Thus one may look with some detachment on the broad beliefs of Paradise Lost or of Donne's Holy Sonnet VII because these beliefs do not seem immanent; and it is easy to keep aloof from the definite beliefs of propaganda art if one is out of the

reach of the action concerned. Presumably a white man who had nothing to fear from the practices shown in the play Stevedore would be able to see that play with more detachment than would a negro dock laborer. Chiefly it is the beliefs that involve common fears and hopes that it is difficult to consider with artistic detachment, and for that reason most propaganda art is a play upon such common hopes and fears.

Detachment is heightened by humor, for humor always implies a degree of emotional unconcern, and laughter an unfavorable perspective. So humor may be used to secure detachment when emotional feeling has become too tense, for example, in the drunken porter scene following the murder in Macbeth. For this reason humor in a work of art devoted to belief may never be used in connection with that belief, although it is the commonest weapon of attack upon beliefs. Consider the plays of Molière, the caroons of Daumier, or Voltaire's Candide, in which disbelief is sought through ridicule and detachment.

Detachment is also obviously heightened by criticism, for it is the principal aim of criticism to consider not the beliefs that may be expressed in art but what is done with them. So criticism and training in criticism may become a protection against propaganda; but it has its own danger in that its beliefs about form may be held with as much emotional intensity as any others.

The "understanding" of beliefs is clearly an activity that may vary greatly, from emotional assent to intellectual recognition, the familiar difference between "knowledge of" and "knowledge about." Presumably "having beliefs" is a more properly aesthetic activity than is their recognition, as it implies their immediate perception rather than reference to them. But even the recognition of beliefs must involve some aspect of possession. Such a possession of beliefs in art may take the form of an imaginative holding or reconstruction. Just as the reader may picture an imaginative setting so he may recreate a belief, even while withholding assent or even without being clearly conscious of a judgment upon the belief at all. As there may be a valuation of a value, so there may be a sympathetic understanding of a belief that is not a sharing of that belief. It is clear, however, that the path is easy from imaginative reconstruction to sympathetic reconstruction, and from that to a conviction upon which there is more or less readiness to act. Such a path is commonly, and often deliberately, prepared by art through the provision of imagery and feeling. So, as Richards found in the case of Donne's sonnet, even dissenting readers were inclined to the beliefs presented.

What "complete" or "accurate" understanding of a work of art may be is a matter that can be determined in any case on only

very general lines. Presumably complete understanding would be the understanding that the artist had of his own work. That however is obviously rarely attained and doubtfully necessary, for it would require an understanding of technical methods which the spectator is expected not to have. Moreover this would limit a work of art to one thing, and it is rather the case, as Dewey suggests, that a new poem is created every time one is read. The greatness of a work of art seems to lie in its multiple aspects of suggestion, in the imagery stimulated rather than in the imagery provided.

A summary of this chapter

It has been the aim of this chapter to show how beliefs are included as content in the forms of art, and what is meant by the aesthetic understanding of such an included belief.

It has been maintained that belief as content can only be an integral part of the structure of any work of art if that belief itself has aesthetic structure. Because of their character as culminated events and as perceptions of identity in contrast, or of contrast under identity, most social and philosophical beliefs satisfy this aesthetic requirement. A work of art containing such beliefs is then a compound of aesthetic bodies, themselves so formed as to show further contrast under identity. The regress implied in this description requires that the ultimate elements of a work of art as perceived, sounds and colors for example, must themselves have aesthetic capacity. This appears to be the case, and the aesthetic right of such highly organized experiences as beliefs is thereby furthered.

If beliefs are included in art as aesthetic aggregates on their own right, they may be so "understood." Thus the understanding of a complex work of art may be many things. There may be aesthetic comprehension of the work as a whole, or attention may be absorbed by the aesthetic groups within it. If the work of art is perceived as art, rather than as belief, the beliefs contained in it are perceived in perspective or with a measure of detachment. This detachment is heightened by the breadth of the belief concerned, and it may be furthered by the contrasts provided by the work of art, for example, by humor.

Primary understanding of a work of art is the understanding of the structure of the work as a whole. Such understanding requires the aesthetic comprehension of beliefs if they are used as elements of the structure. Aesthetic understanding of a belief obviously presupposes an acquaintance with it or a

possession of it. A degree of such possession may be attained by imaginative reconstruction without conscious assent, or conceivably, even with conscious dissent. Beliefs thus held imaginatively are without the force of readiness to act which attends actual convictions, but they offer the groundwork by which propaganda art may transmute them into actual beliefs. Beliefs held imaginatively, if consciously held imaginatively, are entertained intellectually or referentially, and so without emotion. If such entertainment or beliefs is not to be defined as "having beliefs," this case is clearly the one that Richards prescribes. But this is intellectual rather than "emotive" appreciation of art.

CHAPTER VII

SOME EFFECTS OF BELIEF ON ART AND OF ART ON BELIEF

1. The influence of belief on art

Generally speaking, the effect of belief on art has been to give it strength and interest, even beauty. "Wide purpose," says Whitehead, "is in its own nature beautiful by reason of its contribution to the massiveness of experience. It increases the dimensions of the experient subject, adds to its ambit."¹ Consider for example the massiveness to the point of sublimity which great beliefs have added to The Divine Comedy, the Book of Job, or Moby Dick. Beliefs of this sort carry art beyond play and dilettantism. If as Guyau declares, the highest principle of art is to be "le sérieux de la vie," and to make the human heart beat,¹ then art must be concerned with serious beliefs. Ordinarily the human heart does not beat more rapidly in the face of art unless its beliefs and fears are concerned; and even stimulation in the face of "sheer" beauty is an experience akin to belief and provocative of it.

Yet if wide purpose may give width and beauty to art, it is quite as true that narrow purpose may warp it, so that "bad" beliefs may produce "bad" art, and cheap beliefs, cheap art. In this way, as Richards shows, stock attitudes are developed and spread by cinema, caroon, and popular literature. The pleasure taken in art of this sort lies probably more in the recognition of the approved belief than in the art itself. To a large extent it is beliefs in which people are interested rather than art, for as Guyau points out, we delight in finding in things a manifestation of our own intelligence. Yet, as has been indicated, such a choice is not necessarily non-aesthetic. The aesthetic value of the involved belief seems to depend on its width, but not upon

¹"Le but le plus haut de l'art, c'est encore, en somme, de faire battre le coeur humain, et, le coeur étant le centre même de la vie, l'art doit se trouver mêlé à toute l'existence morale ou matérielle de l'humanité." (Les Problèmes de L'Esthétique Contemporaine, ed. Félix Alcan [Paris: Ancienne Germer Baillière et cie., 1897], p. viii.)

its intensity. For there may be intense and clearly directed (and so far aesthetic) beliefs that are narrow and evil, war hatreds for example. War hatreds, war propaganda, and even war experience may possess in a high degree all the aesthetic qualification but one, that of width or a wide search for identity under contrast. It is the function of tragedy to show that such an intense, satisfying, and even successfully culminated experience (in Whitehead's terms, a finite perception) may be evil. Thus it is the purpose of Macbeth to show the evil implications of the intense and successful (and to that degree aesthetic) culmination of Macbeth's ambitions.

Hence only the "art for art's sake" theories can deny the moral responsibility of art, and it is because art may be morally responsible that the censorship of art is justified. At basis, censorship is not concerned with art as such but with the conflict of belief with belief through art. Censorship is a tacit recognition of the aesthetic infectiousness of belief and of the doctrinal invention of art. Yet the common result is that censorships tend in the long run to be more lethal than the art forms they restrain. Censorships are always directed to the preservation of a status and never to the exploration of a possibility. Thus they deny adventure and so weaken art and life. Thus if censorship is justified, there is also justification for the censorship of censorship. Censorship is the extreme form of the effect of belief (or disbelief) on art. Censorship is active criticism; yet ordinarily criticism and censorship are concerned with different kinds of beliefs, criticism with formal beliefs about art, and censorship with the social beliefs that may occur in art.

Through censorship, or tacit censorship, it may then come about that the remaining uncensored art may itself be considered as the expression of belief in the political status that protected it. Thus "pure" art, or art unconcerned with important social issues, may tend to promote a state of acceptance.¹

But belief may not only widen or restrain art, it may actually incite it. Beliefs are always seeking actualization as well as communication, and art provides at least imaginary actualization. Thus strong beliefs, especially the convictions of great religions or of vigorous political sects, have been the cause of much great art. So communism may, if it persists long enough in any one form, create a vigorous body of art, both because it must use art for communication, and because the art

¹K. Burke, "Art under Capitalism," The Nation, Vol. CXXXVII, No. 3571 (Dec. 13, 1933), pp. 675 f.

which embodies its political tenets which provides the satisfaction of an emotion commonly realized.¹

Because art may satisfy these two functions of communication and recognition, the same art work may appear as "propaganda" to one percipient, and as the normal expression of a common faith to another. So, as has been suggested, the Russian cinema, considered in this country as propaganda, may in its own country be considered the product of an expression of belief, and not of an attempt to disseminate belief.

It has been asserted, by communists and others, that fascism can never create a significant body of art because it is an imposed discipline and not the will of the people.² Yet aside from the question of how far either fascism or communism is popular government, there seems to be every evidence that great art can be created without the stimulus of widespread popular approval. This sort of approval is an uncertain criterion of art since it may be much more concerned with the beliefs involved than with the art that presents them. Moreover, as has often been noted, such a criterion requires that art be chiefly concerned with communication. It is a common experience that very poor art may ride to great popularity because of the general acceptance of beliefs involved and because of the obviousness with which those beliefs are presented. For example, the only very vigorous art in America today is the moving picture, which presents over and over again the strongly held popular beliefs of American life.

In these ways belief has been a sanction for art. Max Eastman claims that art has developed under a long series of such sanctions, -- magic, craftsmanship, religion, morals, beliefs, and the like, and that it should at last turn free and live in its own right.³ But it should be noted that in all the history of art there have been at least two kinds of sanctions that have

¹Cf. Guyau, "Il est doux de sentir toute une foule traversée en même temps que soi par une même émotion, que cette émotion soit esthétique, morale, ou même simplement intéressée." (Op. cit., p. 26.)

²For example, by John Strachey in Literature and Dialectical Materialism (New York: Covici, Friede, Inc., 1934). Strachey's evidence is the apparent present decadence of Italian literature. Yet Max Eastman in Artists in Uniform (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1934) makes the same charge against Russian literature, and for the same fundamental reason, namely, lack of freedom.

³Art and the Life of Action, Part I.

supported it. One sort of sanction has merely given art the opportunity and the means to work, and the other has used art to further its own ends. The first sort of sanction seems to be always needed, and there seems to be no avoiding the second. Art is too ready an instrument to escape such use, and art itself has long been much concerned with its own sanctions. The utilitarian relationship may work in two directions. In the one, art may use belief, either to take advantage of the aesthetic possibilities of the beliefs used, or, less legitimately, in order to gain the approval attaching to a popular belief; in the other, belief may use art for its own furtherance. Only the latter, I think, is the precise meaning of the word "propaganda." Both these relationships may occur in a given work of art so that there is mutual aid. Thus without specific knowledge of the artist's intent, it is often impossible to determine whether a given work is "propaganda" or not; and it is precisely this obscurity of purpose which may make the work an effective transmitter of beliefs. Whether Euripides' Trojan Women and Dante's Divine Comedy are propaganda or not, is a disputed and somewhat useless question. There is no question that they effectively transmit beliefs.

In so far as a work of art is a deliberate propaganda, it falls under certain limitations. It must above all be reasonable, i.e., consistent with its premises, however reasonable or unreasonable the premises may be. In fact it is the usual purpose of propaganda art to make the premises of the beliefs concerned appear reasonable by means of the validity of the deductions made from them. Propaganda also requires that the art that carries it be controlled in its production with ease of communication in mind, and so tends to reduce complexity, and subtlety.

Moreover art consecrated to belief may be adventurous only in certain carefully defined ways which do not encroach upon the original beliefs at hand. Only the details of form and setting may be creative. Although creativity in details may suffice for a time to produce a great body of art (witness the artistic variations made on the Christian belief in the Holy Family) eventually there are not enough contrasts to give artistic satisfaction. The element of surprise which is the delight of art is too narrowly trapped.

In short, art at the service of a belief tends to be as broad as the belief it portrays, and so may vary in width from The Divine Comedy to some small program for action. If the art involves not mere readiness for action but a definite program for action, the "art" as such becomes temporary and thin and merges into the unbalance and worry of activity. But in so far as this happens, the work of art is pushed into concern with the future,

and becomes the less a matter of immediate value and so much the less art. An attempt to manipulate the future is not a culminated experience but the beginning of an experience, and so in Dewey's terms not "an experience" and so not aesthetic. Thus propaganda art may vary from the emotional certainty of great belief to the emotional worry of an immediate problem. The beliefs that have been effective in great art have been those of artists who were unafraid of the future and certain that the future would bear them out. Emotional certainty, R. M. Lovett maintains, is one of the artist's great assets.¹ It is clearly one of his greatest assets if he sets out to portray beliefs.

Not to be neglected are the possible effects on art of disbeliefs or negative beliefs. As Richards discovered, active disbeliefs may be more potent in hindering appreciation of art, than active beliefs are in furthering it.² Such disbelief may vent itself in immediate action, e.g., in censorship or in criticism, or it may, by the feelings of frustration it engenders, distract all attention from the aesthetic balance. Thus it is of first importance to remember that we see art qualified by beliefs. It is a common experience of the observation of art that such qualifications may be so strong that they will counteract the intent of the artist. Particularly is this true in the case of beliefs about form and about liking. Many people deny themselves whole fields of enjoyment in art, because on the basis of some experience, they believe that they will not enjoy them. On the other hand much art is enjoyed and brought to attention because it is believed, on some authority, to be "right."

2. The influence of art on belief

Although art is the servant of belief, it is also in a very real sense its master. Once a popular opinion is set in the forms of art, it is largely helpless, and often can be changed only violence. Gradual change is hindered by the mass of prejudices that art may accumulate and preserve. Thus in some ways it might even have been better for the beliefs of the world if there had been no art at all to communicate and preserve them and so prevent their gradual development. It is true that art when linked to belief may perform a service to society in binding peoples together, but it may bind them to ill purpose as well as good.

¹Statement in a lecture by Mr. Lovett.

²Practical Criticism, pp. 43 ff.

Art's most notable disservice to belief is that it may not only foster the lag of beliefs beyond their usefulness, but may deliberately give an air of reasonableness to suborned and even malicious beliefs. Newspaper cartoons offer abundant examples of this use of art.

Whitehead remarks that it is more important that a proposition be interesting than that it be true.¹ Certainly it is aesthetically more important. Truth becomes important to interest in the long run because it strengthens expectation, but temporarily a lie is likely to win because it has a more facile aesthetic reach. Within any restricted range, lying offers immediate prospects of exciting contrasts, that truth may present only after laborious search; and the very proneness of art to seek contrast in identity may lead to the inclusion of irrelevancies. Fear of this result is presumably one of the reasons that determines Richards to say that we must read poetry without any beliefs at all, and that impelled Plato long before him to suspect any use of poetry. There seems to be no reason, however, why we may not consider the beliefs in art with discrimination. Naive acceptance and flat denial are insufficient alternatives.

Many great factors in civilization, Plato's own dialogues for example, seem to be the product of art and belief. Few Christians could deny that their conception of Christianity was the result not only of Christian doctrine but of the long centuries of Christian art.

Yet however effectively art and belief may work together in instances, it appears to be true that no specific belief and particular art form can be permanently linked without mutual injury. To work well together they must constantly present new aspects to each other. This would indicate that fundamentally creativity is a category of both.

Not only, however, are there aspects of artistic form which lend themselves to belief; but art itself may, in more general ways, serve as a foundation for belief. Richards properly claims that art may be legislative to experience, but he denies it any scientific warrant for doing so. But this may be through failure to consider either art or science in their broadest aspects. It will probably be generally admitted that there are three things that all art portrays, -- creativity, an ordered structure and the recognition of identities in contrast are aims of science.

These things that science does ultimately, a work of art may portray in microcosm, because it deals with arbitrary wholes,

¹Adventures of Ideas, p. 313.

i.e., with finite and so attainable perfections. The satisfactions of ordinary experience lie in its culminations, in the resolutions of its contrasts, and in novelty in those resolutions. It is because art is an intensification of these traits that it becomes for us particularly satisfying. Art may thus reveal or clarify a wider type of truth about the general nature of experience than does science unless science be considered synoptically.¹ This is not to assume either that the universe is thus a "work of art," or that art, because of some mystical power, is able "to pierce through to the Real world." It is rather to maintain that if art is an intensification of experience, and metaphysics the broadest possible description of experience, then art may be metaphysically significant and even enlightening.²

It is this ability to see and construct experiences as wholes that constitutes what is called the "intuition" of art. So, as Richards rightly says, the criticism of art must begin with the art object as a whole rather than with its details. Since it is the function of art to seek wholes and identities in contrasts, it may well train us to see nature and society. For an ability to see order, creativity, and identity in contrasts may furnish a verifiable basis for ethical observation. In this sense art itself may inspire belief; and in this sense we may be justified in "believing in" art.

1. Cf. C. Hartshorne, "Only . . . in aesthetics and social notions of quality felt as that of a structure, a felt fusion of feelings into a whole, the same in principle whether that of a chord, a color harmony, a well-integrated personality, or a friendship, does the mutual relevance of things and relations become clarified." (The Philosophy and Psychology of Sensation [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1934], p. 19.)

²Cf. M. Guyau, "Mais ce qui nous paraît infiniment probable, c'est que le poète, et en général l'artiste, acquerra de plus en plus, d'une part l'esprit scientifique, qui montre la réalité telle qu'elle est, d'autre part l'esprit philosophique, qui, dépassant la réalité actuellement connue, se pose les éternels problèmes sur le fond des choses." (Op. cit., p. 161).

CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

As suggested at the outset, any study of the relationship of belief and art must first undertake the definitive problem of the extension to be granted belief. Rejecting I. A. Richards' standpoint that belief must be given only to what has been scientifically verified, or in other words, that belief must be synonymous with knowledge, it has been here asserted that belief is most properly directed towards the possible. It is the function of belief to direct activity where the precise facts are not yet known. Belief, then, has a directional or vector character in contradistinction to facts and knowledge which are located and verified. Belief has a modal character and is directed towards the possibility of verification. This implies that belief is always accompanied by some measure of its correlate doubt, or by the possibility of doubt. Although belief is directed towards action it is not itself action or speculation. Belief is thought at decision and so at rest.

If this definition of belief is tenable, it throws open to question Richards' dictum that we ought to have no beliefs in our experience of art, for art like belief is concerned with the possible, and the beliefs expressed in art are notably concerned with the possible.

The beliefs concerned with art seem to belong to three general types, the literal, the formal, and the social or possible.

Literal beliefs are beliefs about the setting or the historical accuracy of a work of art. If rigidly held they deny to art its proper imaginative character and its spontaneity.

Formal beliefs in art are tenets about the structure and art types. Like beliefs in literal accuracy they are prone to deny adventure and imagination. Formal beliefs like literal beliefs are beliefs about art.

The principle beliefs which are expressed in art are beliefs in the social and the possible. Without a comprehension of such beliefs most tragedy and poetry would not be understandable, for it is in most cases the intent of such art to describe a possibility. Such pictured possibilities may often serve as

social hypotheses, yet their hypothetical character does not warrant Richards' claim that all such beliefs are "objectless" and purely emotive. They have as objects a possible or normative situation.

If these are the kinds of belief that are concerned with art, there remains to be considered their aesthetic warrant for such relationship. This requires an examination of the aesthetic capacity of belief. In some ways belief appears to be aesthetically compatible with art, and in other ways notably incompatible.

Belief is very much unlike art in at least three general ways. Belief is an abstract possibility or a supposition, while art is realization; belief is conservative while art is spontaneous and changing; and beliefs are inclined to be forthright and blunt, while art is rarely without aspects of beauty.

There are, however, possible resolutions of these differences. For if beliefs are possibilities, art may at least imaginatively realize those possibilities; and art may serve belief by giving it spontaneity, grace, and form.

Belief is fundamentally like art in its concern with the possible, and its character of definiteness and freedom from worry and reflection. Like art, belief is prone to be marked by emotion; and like art, belief is for the most part concerned with value. Emotional content, usually manifested as "attitude," furnishes the most common means of transfer of attention and acceptance from art to belief; and their common concern with values is the most usual means of their association.

If the characters just listed are the basis for the aesthetic association of art and belief, it remains to be asked how they are so associated. For the beliefs included in art, this is obviously an aspect of the problem of form and content.

If the aesthetic capacity of all experience may be assumed, it follows from this reason, as well as from those listed above, that a belief may itself be an aesthetic object. It has what Dewey considers the fundamental aesthetic character of being an event brought to a successful conclusion; and, especially in the case of social beliefs, it may involve a perception of identity under contrast. Thus beliefs may be included in works of art as aesthetic aggregates on their own right; and the work of art which includes them is then a compound of aesthetic forms.

It follows from the above that the aesthetic understanding of a belief in a work of art must include both a realization of the aesthetic capacity of the belief, and of its place in the perspective of the art object. In order that the feeling capacity of the belief may be realized it is necessary that the belief be viewed with some measure of acquaintance, even in the

perspective afforded by the work of art. Some measure of acquaintance may be acquired by the imaginative reconstruction of a belief, even without doctrinal assent. Yet such imaginative reconstruction leads readily to assent.

Since both belief and art may concern themselves with all the values and disvalues that man has held, it follows that there can be no blanket judgment on the influence of one upon the other. It appears to have been generally true that beliefs have given breadth of purpose and even beauty to art, and that beliefs have given rise to great art. Beliefs have also narrowed art and destroyed it. Art, on the other hand, has served to create and disseminate beliefs and give them form; and it has both unwarrantably preserved such beliefs and as unwarrantably undone them. Belief and art have been of most aid to each other when they have continuously presented new aspects to each other.

But not only has belief inspired art; art may, at least in very general ways, inspire belief, even metaphysical belief. If art is an intensification of experience, it follows that it is a significant sample of experience. This being the case the most general characters of art, that is, its creativity, its orderly structure, and its search for identity in contrast, may then serve as categories for the general description of experience.

In so far as the descriptive analysis given in this dissertation holds, it follows that there can be no general prohibition of belief in art, such as Richards proposes; nor can there be any general right of acceptance. Whether or not we ought to believe in the beliefs of art must depend primarily on the belief, preference, or value concerned. To declare otherwise is to assert that the values of art are unique, and so different from those of ordinary experience or of science. But such a separation seems impossible to maintain, and Richards himself denies it.

The general right of belief in art and in the beliefs of art is the right of hypothesis. It is the right of preference for one item as presumably better for some purpose than another. Such beliefs have the right of conjecture, but must be recognized as conjectural beliefs.

But art not only presents values, it may itself be a value; and to that extent also belief in art may be justified.

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